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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ISLAMABAD 002305

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [ECON](#) [PK](#)
SUBJECT: BOUCHER AND GILANI DISCUSS BORDER SECURITY AND
COMBATING MILITANTS

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: During a July 1 meeting, Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani told Assistant Secretary Boucher that his government was serious about the need to confront militant extremists, establish a foundation for sustainable development and address Pakistan's growing economic crisis. Gilani also noted that he was open to closer cooperation with Afghanistan, as demonstrated by his visit there, but he felt Afghanistan needed to do more on border security. Boucher urged Gilani to do everything possible to maintain pressure on militant groups in the border areas and encouraged Gilani's efforts to promote greater cooperation with Afghanistan. Boucher assured Gilani that the U.S. wants to assist Pakistan in its security efforts and its struggle to build a more sustainable economy. He reiterated U.S. support for Pakistan's transition to democratic government and welcomed Gilani's upcoming visit to the U.S. where he will meet with President Bush on July 28. End summary.

¶2. (C) Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard Boucher, Ambassador Patterson and National Security Council Senior Director for South and Central Asia Mark Webber met July 1 with Prime Minister Gilani. Interior Minister Rehman Malik and Mahmud Durrani, National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister, also attended.

¶3. (C) PM Gilani said his recent meeting with President Bush at Sharm-el-Sheikh had led to an "important and useful" exchange on the bilateral relationship. NSC Director Webber confirmed Gilani was scheduled to meet with President Bush again on July 28 during Gilani's upcoming visit to the U.S. and noted the President had also been pleased with their previous meeting.

PAKISTAN'S THREE-PRONGED COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGY

¶4. (C) Gilani noted his discussion with President Bush had focused mainly on counterterrorism and the rise of extremism in Pakistan. Gilani said he outlined the government's three-pronged counterterrorism plan for the President. This plan consisted of the following elements: 1) peace agreements with tribal leaders; 2) increased development assistance; and 3) military force.

FIRST PRONG - AGREEMENTS WITH TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

¶5. (C) Regarding recent attempts to forge agreements with tribal leaders in border areas, Gilani stressed that these agreements were negotiated with tribal elders, not militant leaders. It was vital, he continued, that the tribal

communities be incorporated into Pakistan's counterterrorism strategy.

SECOND PRONG - DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE TO BORDER AREAS

¶6. (C) Gilani emphasized the importance of economic and infrastructure development assistance in addressing the root causes of extremism. These border areas were plagued with illiteracy and poverty; education and healthcare facilities were completely inadequate. There were almost no opportunities for young men seeking a trade and almost no infrastructure to support industry. Gilani said he knew the U.S. was aware of this problem and had already offered substantial assistance, but he stressed the need for greater market access and reconstruction opportunity zones. Gilani added that elected officials from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas were "100 percent supportive" of the plans for development.

¶7. (C) Gilani highlighted the importance of having the support of local leadership in the border areas. He pointed out that when the U.S. had pressured Pakistan to eradicate poppy cultivation in the 1980s and 1990s, the introduction of an alternative livelihoods program in the Northwest Frontier Province had been critical to making Pakistan almost poppy free.

THIRD PRONG - MILITARY FORCE

¶8. (C) Gilani stated that, when necessary, the government would use force, but that this option should be "kept in the

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background" as much as possible. Military force should be held in reserve and deployed if the tribes did not live up to the agreements. Gilani noted that these agreements meant tribal leaders had given their "collective word" that their communities would not shelter or support militants and that they would not attack law enforcement or military personnel. If they broke this agreement, said Gilani, "they will be punished, and the law will take its course."

PUBLIC WELCOMES CRACKDOWN ON EXTREMISTS

¶9. (C) Gilani said that in recent days civilian law enforcement agencies had already begun a crackdown on violent extremists who attack barber shops or music stores. These forces were also sending the message that strong action would be taken against those threatening or kidnapping minorities. Gilani claimed there had already been a positive public response to this assertion of authority. He said people were relieved to see the law enforcement agencies taking action. "This is the first time ever we feel we have popular support" for a governmental crackdown.

PRIORITIZING THE WAR ON TERROR

¶10. (C) Emphasizing that the coalition government was united on the counterterrorism issue, Gilani noted that General Kayani, Chief of Army Staff, recently gave a presentation on the security situation and his strategy to the civilian leadership. Gilani noted that during this briefing, Pakistan People's Party leader Asif Zardari sat to one side of him, while Nawaz Sharif, leader of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz sat to the other side.

¶11. (C) Boucher assured Gilani the U.S. wanted to work with Pakistan in its counterinsurgency efforts and urged Pakistan to maintain the pressure on militant groups. Boucher observed that recent internal political turmoil had distracted Pakistan's leadership from focusing on the security and economic crises; he recognized the government faced serious political challenges but national security must be the top priority. Gilani agreed, saying Pakistan was fighting this war with conviction and acknowledged that continuing instability also threatened Pakistan's economic

well-being by discouraging foreign investment.

¶12. (C) Gilani thanked the U.S. for providing reimbursements under Coalition Support Funds and for its support on F-16s, but complained that Pakistan did not have the sophisticated equipment necessary to strike back at militants effectively. If Pakistan hit a target, instead of the U.S., it was "much easier for people to swallow." Therefore, Gilani asked if credible intelligence on potential targets could be passed to Pakistan for action. It would, he said, enhance the credibility of both governments with the Pakistani public.

AFGHANISTAN: PAKISTAN SEEKING CLOSER RELATIONSHIP

¶13. (C) Gilani asserted he was interested in improved relations with Afghanistan and noted that he, the Foreign Minister and Interior Minister had all met with President Karzai to convey that message. He also mentioned the wheat that Pakistan had sent Afghanistan to assist with food shortages, though he noted smuggling of wheat continued. Gilani said his government saw a stable and prosperous Afghanistan as key to Pakistan's own stability and prosperity. He was working on organizing the smaller jirgas agreed upon with Afghanistan; he had already approved an attendee list.

CONTINUING PLIGHT OF AFGHAN REFUGEES

¶14. (C) Gilani noted the difficult situation of the three million Afghan refugees who reside in Pakistan. They would not return to Afghanistan until there were jobs and schools for them across the border. Gilani said that he was considering hosting a conference in Islamabad to focus international donor assistance on this problem. A tripartite (Pakistan, Afghanistan and the UN) effort needed to be made to facilitate refugee returns.

PAK-AFGHAN SECURITY COOPERATION

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¶15. (C) He then brought up an oft raised point regarding border security: that Pakistan had 900 posts along the Pak-Afghan border while Afghanistan had only about 100. He described Pakistan's efforts to introduce a biometric system at border crossings, indicating that Afghanistan was unable to maintain the equipment on its side. Gilani said Pakistan was considering a border "fence" to deter illicit cross-border movements. He commented that many of the combatants moving across the border were "legacies of the past," referring to foreign fighters who had joined Afghanistan's fight against the Soviet Union.

¶16. (C) In combating cross-border activity, Gilani stressed the need for intelligence sharing. Boucher pointed out that Pakistan's participation in Border Coordination Centers would help address that need, but Gilani said Pakistan forces needed satellite imagery to locate and target militants. Interior Minister Rehman Malik interjected that \$50 million assistance from the U.S. for the Frontier Corps was not enough; the forces needed more equipment, training and intelligence sharing. Boucher agreed that Frontier Corps training should be a shared focus, but Malik protested that training was a long-term process when short-term solutions were needed. Gilani added that Pakistan's forces could do more if they were better equipped; he claimed that if Pakistan could stop militant activities in the border areas "80 percent of terrorism in the world would be reduced."

GILANI REJECTS AFGHAN ACCUSATIONS: "OUR INTERESTS ARE MUTUAL"

¶17. (C) Regarding recent anti-Pakistan statements from Karzai and his officials, Gilani denied they had any basis and said he had told Karzai to reach out directly to him at any time. Karzai had invited Gilani to a joint sitting of Afghanistan's parliament, but Gilani noted that Afghanistan needed to

demonstrate tangible trust and not assume Pakistan was behind every bad act. "Our interests are mutual," declared Gilani.

¶18. (C) Boucher said Afghanistan had a strong interest in moving forward on the jirga process, to encourage greater people-to-people engagement at tribal and governmental levels. Gilani agreed that Afghanistan and Pakistan needed to cooperate on combating militants, otherwise the militants were only displaced by their respective forces. Gilani said, "we need to throw them (the militants) somewhere they are not leaving."

TRIBAL AREAS AND COUNTERINSURGENCY

¶19. (C) Boucher asked about political reform in the tribal areas. Gilani said the government was committed to mainstreaming the tribal systems and reforming the Frontier Crimes Regulations. There should be, he said, no more public hangings or executions. The people should have greater civil rights, including the right of assembly. Ultimately, Gilani foresaw merging the Federally Administered Tribal Areas into the frontier province, but very gradually. Referring to the losses taken by Frontier Corps, Frontier Constabulary, and local policemen, Gilani said Pakistan was not in an economic position to provide compensation for their families given that virtually every man killed was the bread winner for an extended family. Gilani said this fact had a significant impact on how poor communities viewed the war on terror.

FOOD AID AND ENERGY SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

¶20. (C) Boucher agreed on the need for sustainable development and, regarding the food crisis, said the U.S. was actively seeking to identify sources for food aid. Gilani charged the previous administration with exacerbating the food crisis by selling too much wheat and then being forced to purchase it back to address the shortages. Gilani said the government had "lost millions of dollars" this way, calling it "criminal negligence."

¶21. (C) Regarding the energy crisis, Boucher acknowledged it would take a long time to develop energy supplies and that the U.S. wanted to help Pakistan organize the private sector to assist with this. Gilani welcomed the assistance and recognized the need for investors. The energy problems and inadequate infrastructure were causing serious damage to Pakistan's industries and further discouraging foreign

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investment. Boucher agreed and said the U.S. would continue to seek ways to assist; he hoped the U.S. would be able to follow through on something similar to the "Biden Plan," but added that translating the proposal into the U.S. budget could be very difficult.

GILANI PROMOTES HEALTH CARE AGENDA

¶22. (C) Gilani said that he was launching a program to establish basic healthcare clinics throughout the country and expanding the number of female doctors so that women would be more likely to come in for treatment. Gilani added that he was going to personally focus on the problem of hepatitis in Pakistan and lead a campaign to heighten awareness and ensure treatment was widely available.

JUDICIARY ISSUE

¶23. (C) Gilani admitted the government's failure to reinstate the judiciary was criticized by the public. Asked about the Long March, he said the government had handled it well. The activists in the Long March had wanted the government to confront them; instead, he said, "we brought them water and snacks." Boucher offered his appreciation of the government's flexibility in considering various options to resolve the judiciary issue. Gilani said the Pakistan People's Party wanted to find a balanced solution, but, given

Nawaz Sharif's inflexible stance and public opinion favoring the lawyers movement, he admitted his party felt caught "between the devil and the blue sea" on this issue.

124. (U) Assistant Secretary Boucher has cleared this cable.

PATTERSON